1:Wilson E-5(1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

them if the father says his son has done wrong his neighbours reply: "You have caused him to do wrong yourself. Did you suppose him to be a boy that you did not provide marriage-cattle for him?" Then the father becomes more ready to pay damages for his son.' And again, 'If a young man finds that his father objects to his marrying the girl he loves, he complains to his father's neighbours (*pamafwa abapalemani ho gwine*). Then they discuss the matter and say to the father: "Do you want him to teach you a lesson by taking a chief's wife or daughter, for whom many cattle must be given?" So the father agrees.'

Neighbours are concerned, too, to see a fair distribution of a deceased fellow's estate, and the fulfilment of the heir's obligations to his wards. 'It is not the relatives, but "the fathers of the village" who watch over a young boy's interests when his father is dead' (*vide infra*, p. 106). We listened to one discussion of a quarrel over inheritance which was believed to have led to kinsmen working sorcery against each other. At this discussion four village neighbours of the sick man (thought to be suffering from the sorcery of his father's brother's son), as well as ten relatives, attended.

The father's neighbours are also asked to mediate when a son has wronged his father and seeks forgiveness. For example, Mwangoloia's son had committed adultery with his father's wife. He paid six head of cattle and then went off to the coast, where he remained a long time. When he returned he brought two cows and approached his father's neighbours, asking them to take the cows to his father. When they took the cows his father said: 'He must find a bull as well, and brew beer, because he is my eldest son.' So he got a bull and brewed beer, and the father also brewed. 'Then', said the old man who reported the case, 'the fathers of the village came together and the bull was killed and they ate the meat and drank the beer. . . . Thus the son made friends with his father.'

Here we have the ritual of reconciliation between relatives in which neighbours of the senior must participate, for their anger is held to be as dangerous to the junior as that of his senior relative. Informal giving of advice merges into the practice of arbitration, and of murmuring against a wrong-doer, and thus, it is thought, causing him misfortune. These latter practices are discussed in ensuing chapters.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

abanyago have no more general authority than the doctors who divine or treat the sick. Their parallels among men are the priests (also called *abanyago*) who perform the rain ritual and the sacrifices to dead chiefs.

The one position which endows a woman with legal authority is that of father's sister. A senior sister has a joint responsibility, along with the headman of the village, for the distribution of her dead brother's property, and her brother's children may appeal to her to arbitrate if they have a dispute with their father while he is yet alive: this is particularly important in the families of chiefs, since a chief's son cannot bring his father before commoners for arbitration. The authority of a father's sister is, however, exercised only within the lineage and does not extend even to wives of lineage members. Co-wives may take a dispute for arbitration to their husband, but if, as often happens, he is thought to be prejudiced, they go to a male neighbour, or to the headman of the village, in the same way as when the dispute is with an unrelated person (cf. p. 140).

Only in the group of unmarried girls in a village does there appear to be the germ of control by seniors of the same sex. We traced one case in which a quarrel between two girls nearing the age of puberty was settled by the slightly older girls of the same village, who punished one who had beaten her fellow without justification, and then lied to them when they inquired into the case, by scratching her with their nails. As they reach puberty the girls, who have grown up together in one village and formed a closely knit group, become scattered among the different age-villages of their husbands and there leadership among women is not developed (*vide infra*, pp. 171-2). This does not mean, however, that women are excluded from arbitration; they can, and frequently do, bring cases on their own account, not necessarily acting through husband or father. Unlike the pagans, Christian women who have quarrelled do sometimes ask a leading woman of their congregation to arbitrate. At Rungwe the women leaders were the sister of the chief and the wife of a teacher, both personalities; and it was to them that their fellows went to relate their troubles and ask for an opinion. We traced two such cases. Very often, however, Christian women go to a man, the Christian leader of the village, as their husbands do.

The Administration has not attempted to suppress arbitration

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F7617 Ngonde F7617
Nyakyusa

it seems as if there was another disease in the corpse itself, it is a 764
stinking mass of disease.' Traditionally they use two medicinal plants to wash with, but in some chiefdoms near mission stations they now wash without them. The chief of one such country explained: 'In the old days they feared very much to eat before bathing—but now sometimes they just wash their hands and eat. [177]
Of old they feared death, they feared lest the disease should spread, they wished to rid themselves of the contamination of the corpse. They used to wash with two plants—as medicine. Now they just bathe in the stream or sometimes only just wash their hands.' But, [184]
particularly in chiefdoms at a distance from the centres of European influence, the fear of the contagion of death is still very strong.

Death then is, for the majority of pagan Nyakyusa, a fearful as 761
well as a grievous event; less fearful than it used to be to their 184
fathers, but more fearful by far to them than it is to their Christian neighbours.

(c) *The sacrifice*

At all except the very poorest burials one or more head of cattle 764
are killed. Cows are provided wherever possible, but, if no cows are available, bulls may be used instead. If the man who has died left cattle of his own, one at least of his herd is killed; if he has left none, his family make every effort to buy or borrow one, or else they provide one themselves from their own herds. If the dead man was rich, several of his cows will be killed. If his senior son has cattle of his own, he should kill one for his father (*ilumbamba*) and if there are a number of grown-up sons the senior of each group of full brothers will offer a cow.

Not only the immediate family of a dead man but also the 764
fathers (or brothers) of his wives and the husbands of his full 602
sisters and daughters are expected to provide cows for killing at his burial, and if he is buried at his 'father's' place then his 'father's' affinal relatives also are expected to bring cattle or cloths. When a married woman dies, her husband and her own 'father' are expected each to provide a cow or a bull. Occasionally other affines of her husband bring calves, but less usually. More cattle are killed for men than for women. For a young child nothing is killed.

The cattle are killed either by the dead man's 'father' or by his 764
heir; if a woman has died, then by her husband. At a man's burial 768

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the killing has a legal implication, for the death of a man involves the transfer of his wives and property to another. If the inheritance is quite clear and disputes are unlikely, then a 'father' of the dead man tells the heir to kill the burial cattle. All the people present see him do this and know that he is the heir. And if the inheritance is, after all, denied him later, then the fact that he killed the cattle at his brother's (or father's) funeral gives him a strong *prima facie* claim to its recovery in the courts. If the inheritance is doubtful then a 'father' of the dead man kills the cattle. It is known that he himself cannot inherit and his killing of the cattle is an assertion of his authority to decide who shall do so.

When a man of the chief's lineage dies, a live cow is buried with him and the more general custom of taking a cow or bull to look into the grave is interpreted as being 'like burying the cow'. The cattle used in this way must be of the lineage stock and are reserved for sacrifice.

All the cattle killed are thought to go with the shade to the land of the dead (*abalo nagwa kubanyuka*) and it is believed that if he goes without any cattle he may be rejected by his kinsmen there. Tales are told of meeting dead men in the bush with their cattle which were killed for them. A cloth is a substitute for a cow and cloths which are buried likewise go with the dead. 'We will meet in the land of the shades and he will be wearing these cloths.' At one burial we saw, the dead man had left no cows of his own but his brothers killed two cows for him, three beasts were brought by affines, and sixteen cloths were brought by kinsmen, affines, and friends. 'Why', we asked, 'do you spend so much wealth at death?' 'Because, we say, as the owner has died let him take his wealth with him to the place of the shades. If he dies in lonely poverty he goes with nothing.' At another burial two beasts were brought by kinsmen, six by affines and one by a friend. There were thirty-two cloths, fifteen brought by kinsmen, twelve by affines, and five by friends. 'The bringing of cloths is to express sympathy (*kukati nsaga*); we bury many of them with the corpse, and some we leave over, which we bind on as mourning belts (*amakiba*). Of old, people brought the cloth the Safwa weave, and brass body-rings. It means: "May our fellow go with them; may he swagger with them—with the cloth and body-rings (*ko kati amasiete abakye nafye, a magege nafye*)." And we pour out food that he may take it with him.'

During the course of the war-dance (described below) the young

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1937 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

CHAPTER III

FAREWELL TO THE DEAD

After spending three or four days weeping, and fasting, and dancing, the main body of mourners scatter to their homes, but the close kinsmen remain for a week or two sleeping at the home of the deceased, awaiting the ritual of farewell. The Nyakyusa themselves distinguish three main events in it: the 'picking up of pumpkin-seeds' (*okusola ibyungu*) when the chief mourners first begin to wash; the 'shaving of the sprouting hair' (*okusemula ilisemulo*) when the heir of inheritance is brewed and the estate divided; and the 'ritual of the gasping cough' (*ingutulo*) when the widows, having lain with the heir, go to visit their parents. The details differ appreciably between Selya and MuNgonde on the one hand, and Kukwe country on the other, and we describe them separately.

1. IN SELYA AND MUNGONDE

(*a*) *The events*

1. '*Picking up pumpkin-seeds.*' The picking up of pumpkin-seeds begins with the formal recognition of the heir, if the deceased was a married man. The heir and widows are suddenly seized and hustled, resisting, into the mourning hut. If they go willingly 'it seems as if they wished their relative to die'. The officiant smears their chests with ash and puts a strand of the *ilinginyafwe* creeper on each one's right shoulder. These are both signs of mourning, and the creeper is also 'a sign that we have given him the inheritance'. After a few minutes the heir and widows are formally summoned to come out of the hut, and they go off to wash away the ash and creeper in the stream. But first, the flowering head of a banana is buried in the courtyard near the door of the mourning hut and the grave of the deceased. If he was not a married man and there are no widows to be inherited, the ritual begins with this. The banana flower is explicitly identified with the corpse: it must face in the direction from which the ancestors came, as the corpse does; if the deceased is a male the flowering head is from a plantain (*iseki*); if a female from a sweet banana (*injali* or *indefu* or

J. Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Saiya, Mr. Ngonde

765 *lwafye*), and it is wrapped in a leaf (of the same species as the
766 flower) which represents a blanket. The symbolism is interpreted
770 in terms of the habit of growth. A trunk of plantain or sweet bananas flowers and fruits only once, then dies and is pruned away, being replaced by a sucker from the same root, hence the association between the flower and the corpse. *Ilimbi* is a large variety of
[262] plantain, eaten when it is green and hard; *injali* is a smallish banana eaten when it is ripe and sweet, and it takes nine months to develop. 'When an *injali* stem forms and a woman conceives a child at the same time, the bananas will be ripe and the woman bear her child together.' No one hesitated about this identification of plantain with male, sweet bananas with female; it is as obvious in Nyakyusa as the associations of 'breeches' and 'petticoats' in English.

768 The officiant sprinkles a powdered medicine on to the earth of the grave and all the participants (that is, the heirs, widows, children, and certain siblings of the deceased) rub themselves in it. They rub forehead, right elbow, right knee, and right toe in the pile of earth. Only chiefs and their close relatives and twins refrain, for they have been drinking medicines, and such close contact with a corpse would 'spoil their medicine': 'The medicine would go rotten if they touched the grave which contains medicine,' so the chief's forehead, etc., must not touch the grave. He merely touches the earth with a finger-tip.

783 Having touched the earth, all the participants go to wash in a
785 stream, and when they return they wash again ritually in the doorway of the mourning hut, the doctor pouring out medicated water from a small calabash and each participant catching the water in his hands and rubbing them and his mouth and knees with it. Then they oil themselves. Until this ritual they must remain dirty and dishevelled with the mud and ash of mourning on them, and any who steal away to wash are fined by the other relatives.

786 Next the officiant takes roasted bananas and sticks into each one or more pumpkin-pips (*inyungu*) and one or more lentils (*inandala*).[1] She half-buries these in the earth at the doorway of the hut, or sits in the doorway holding a banana near the ground, and each participant approaches in turn and stoops and bites off the banana, and eats it.

The *ulufumbo* (the litter of dry banana leaves on which the

[1] Some also add cowpeas (*imbungi*), others oil-seeds (*ipamba*).

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Nyanda FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, Ma Nyanda.

769 deceased was a man and wealthy, the heir kills a bull or cow for a feast.

765 184 According to one account, 'the heir kills a cow saying: "This is your cow, Father." Then he takes the praying calabash and fills it with beer and goes to the banana grove. The others sit in the courtyard watching from afar. He blows beer and then pours out a little, several times, mentioning the dead man's name and those of three or four prominent dead relatives, and prays for children, health, and food. He takes his own senior son (or the son of his dead brother) with him to see what he does, for he (the son) will do it after his death. Then they come back and the meat is eaten and beer drunk.' But we never saw this happen nor was the prayer in the banana grove mentioned by other informants.

782 765 If the millet put to soak fails to sprout, however, there must be prayer. It is thought that there has been disagreement among the mourners and the shades are angry and have spoilt the millet. The kinsmen gather to confess their quarrels and pray before preparing another batch.

765 At the shaving of the sprouting hair (or some other time during the death ritual) the sisters of the dead man formally admonish his widows on their behaviour as wives. One admonition recorded lasted two hours, and the main theme was the stinginess of the widows in entertaining their sisters-in-law when the latter had come to visit.

765 • 768 587 On the morning after 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' the participants shave their whole heads and are anointed with ointment by the officiant. In the evening comes the formal handing over of the inheritance, if the deceased was a married man. The heir sits in the doorway of the mourning hut and the senior wife of the deceased hands him a bill-hook, such as is used for pruning bananas. He is adjured by his relatives, his village headman, and his neighbours to care for the children of the deceased as if they were his own, and the widows are told: 'This is your husband who will hoe for you always.' If there is any division of property it is formally made on this occasion, the dead man's sisters and the village headman being primarily responsible for a just allocation. And though, traditionally, women were given no choice about inheritance, this was in fact the occasion on which their protests and preferences were expressed. Then the heir is thrown into the hut with the women he has inherited 'on to the ashes' (*umfwandile*), and must have intercourse with all of them that night. One of

[423]

2: Wilson E-9 (1934-1938)1957 F3617 Ngonde F3617
Nyakyusa
Selga, Hellgrede

them knocks on the wall when he has succeeded, and the officiator raises the *ululale*, the trill of applause and triumph[1] which is also the war-cry, and shakes a basket of seeds by the door shouting: 'Ours, ours, we marvel at the thing!' Until this ritual connection the heir and the widows remain continent, and great importance is attached to the success of the heir in having intercourse with all the widows. Should a widow refuse the heir after touching the ash it is said that she will either die herself or cause any man she lies with to die of 'the ash'; but if she escapes before being smeared with ash then she is safe. The heir is also in danger if a widow should refuse him after he has touched the ash.

The morning after the ritual union the heir is formally summoned out of the hut by a man knocking on the door and crying: 'Come out, war has come (*loko' ukwita bwitale*),' i.e. sexual intercourse has begun. He sits on a stool in the doorway of the hut and is greeted by the children of the deceased: 'Good morning, Father.'

iii. '*The gaping cough.*' Each of the inherited women goes off to her own father's homestead with the filth (*ondefe*) of intercourse on her. She does not even wash her hands, and she takes with her cooked bananas which she has smeared with her husband's semen and her own emission. This she buries in the banana grove in her father's homestead in which he prays to his ancestors. She takes meat to her father if an animal has been killed at the 'shaving of the sprouting hair'. The heir similarly goes to his father's homestead (or that of his father's heir) with cooked bananas to be buried in his father's sacred grove. Each wife drinks beer mixed with medicine with her father and other close relatives. From the time when the heir sleeps with the widows until this ritual is performed, they cannot visit their parents nor can their children do so (though usually children come and go freely in the home of their mother's people) and, more particularly, a widow must not drink from her mother's cup, or eat with her, or sit over her fire, or touch her hand. It is believed that, if the ritual is neglected, those for whom it should have been performed will be seized with a racking cough (*ingotolo*) and diarrhœa. Even Christians, who eschew the other parts of the death ritual, often participate in the *ingotolo*.

When a woman has died she should be replaced by a sister or brother's daughter, just as the dead man is by a brother or son,

[1] The closest equivalent in our society is cheering, but the *ululale* is raised by women.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

ever, insisted that it was performed whether there was a girl to send or not, but if several sisters were married to the same man it was carried out only for the eldest of them.

We do this whether we are substituting another woman or not, but we do it only for the senior sister. There were three Sebas married to Mwaipopo, and when the two junior ones died we did not go to cut the bananas, but now the senior Seba has died, we do cut the bananas.

Mwaiselage explained that his brother-in-law would come to cut bananas when his senior wife, Lyandileko, died, whether she died before or after her junior sister who is her co-wife, but the brother would not cut bananas at the death of the junior sister.

MWAKWELEBEJA: We cut the banana grove again when all the children of those women, the kinswomen married to one man, are dead. That is, their mother's brother's son (*untani*) does it, for their mother's brother will be dead by then. It means the same thing: 'The kinship is finished.' They pay to say: 'No, Father, it still continues.'

A woman to replace the dead is asked for even though her husband has predeceased her. X, describing the ritual added:

And when my mother dies (if my father has died first) still her relatives, my *abipwa*, come to cut the banana grove. I throw them a cloth crying: 'Not the bananas.' Also they bring me another woman. If they do not, I go to them and say: 'Give me another mother to look after me.' They give me a girl whom I give to a half-brother (as his wife). If there is no girl they give me a cow, saying: 'That's your mother.'

Ibaso and Mwaijamba explained:

If, when a woman has died, her people are poor, having no child to replace her, they say: 'We are sorry, but there is nothing at all here, this cow is for drawing water with.' And formerly they returned all the cattle later on; but now, since we have stopped claiming calves, we divide the cows. . . . But when there is a daughter and they give her to me, the husband, we give marriage cattle again. Kinship does not come to an end.

To recapitulate, the main events of the ritual of death are the formal recognition of the heir (if the deceased was a married man); the burial of a flowering head of bananas and the rubbing in earth from the grave; washing; a ritual eating of bananas with certain seeds; sweeping out the mourning hut; circling the hearth and putting an old pot on the fire with various foods; the presentation of millet by relatives and friends, and a ritual grinding; a second

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, Mu Ngonde

765 washing and the throwing away of a stem of bananas and leaves in a
●768 stream, and bringing back a hen and bark-cloth; eating a mash on the hearth; the brewing of beer with the millet presented; a ritual drinking and further shaving when this is ripe; an admonition of the heir on his duties and acknowledgement of him as 'father' by the children of the deceased; sexual intercourse between the heir and the widows he inherits; the burial by each inherited woman of some of the fluids from that intercourse in her father's banana grove, and a ritual drinking of beer with her father and other close relatives.

If the deceased is a woman her brother comes to cut her husband's banana grove and seize her children, as a sign that kinship between the lineages has ceased, but he is dissuaded with gifts, and treats his sister's children with medicines. A sister is sent to replace the dead woman, the widower has intercourse with her at 'the shaving of the sprouting hair', and she returns home to bury some of the fluids in her father's grove, and drink beer with him ritually.

An account of one of the rituals which we attended in Selya which is quoted in the documents (p. 234) may give some reality to this stark outline.

(*b*) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

765. When asked why the ritual of death is performed the first reply
764 of Nyakyusa informants was that they were driving away (*ukukaga*)
828 the dead and that if it were neglected those for whom it should have been performed would go mad (*ukubopa ikigili*). Angombwike explained: 'In the death ritual they drive away the shade (*unsyuka*) saying: "Why are you always at me, nagging at me, in dreams?" It is to swear at him (the shade) and drive him away.'

Another informant explained: 'The touching of the earth is the expression of the wish that he will not come into our dreams and thoughts any more, and he does not!' Another confirmed this saying: 'The powdered medicine and touching the earth are alike;
765 they wish to stop him (the deceased) coming into our dreams.'
764 And an Ndali informant said: 'Shaving is to get rid of the shade
775 which was on their bodies.'

There is also the implication of speeding the deceased on his way to the land of the shades, for it is believed that if the ritual is not performed he will not be welcomed by his dead kinsmen and will continue to haunt the living. Of an unfinished death ritual

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya/MuNgonde

768 It is forbidden for the heir to lie with the dead man's wives before
[784] the ritual[1] is over. But at the time of the beer, when the drinking is
[833] finished, we put him into the house and he lies with them. If he has lain with them previously the semen refuses to come. . . . But if all goes well the officiants raise the cry of triumph (*akalulu*) and shake a winnowing basket of seeds by the door and cry: 'Ours, ours, we marvel at the thing, we marvel at the thing (*ifyitu, ifyitu, tuniyomwike ilindu*).' If he fails they go to divine and the diviner says: '*Mindu* (sickness from the shades), he has forestalled the ritual (*akindile ubunyago*).' Then they pray in the bananas. He must have intercourse with all the women he is inheriting; yes, however old they may be, he must lie with them that night or else they will lose their strength of body or mind, or else their legs will swell. With the old ones he will never lie again! He drinks
[831] fresh milk to give him strength beforehand! Fresh milk gives strength, it produces semen.

The next morning each of the wives goes off to her father with *ilibalaga* and with meat; the first is buried in the bananas, it goes to the place of the shades, the meat is eaten. And the man too goes with his *ilibalaga* to his own father. Each wife makes her *ilibalaga* by wiping her own and her husband's genitals with her hands and then taking cooked bananas in them. He himself does likewise at the end.

768 The *ilibalaga* goes to the place of the shades, it is to drive away the
775 shade of the dead man; before this he had not reached the place of shades but was on the way. In this manner we tell the shade that we have put another in his place, we tell him to go and join the other shades now and to come back with them to warm themselves by the fire in his old house.

[643] QUESTION: How can a chief who inherits many wives lie with them all in one night?

643 KASITILE: I do not know how. Kyala gives him strength! . . . He has
768 intercourse with them all. Yes, really this does happen. . . . But if the
833 man is old and fails to lie with them all, perhaps the wives will conceal the fact. He lies on one side of a partition wall with his wives and the people (for many come to sleep in his house that night) on the other. Then if he fails altogether . . . no one beats the partition with a stick, they all stay quiet till morning; but if he succeeds at first, and fails at the last few, they may perhaps conceal it. One of the wives is told by the officiant to beat the partition with a stick when he has lain with all his wives. When she does this the officiants who are in the doorway shake up lentils and millet and pumpkin-seeds in a winnowing basket and call out: 'Ours, ours! We marvel at the thing!' If he fails altogether they stay quiet and next day go to divine; the diviner says: '*Mindu.*' Then they pray and pray, and praise all the shades of old, and that night he tries again and the semen comes.

775 The seeds of lentil, millet and pumpkin are symbols of the shades, the
768
833

[1] [i.e. the farewell to the dead.--Analyst]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

lentil is the shade, the millet is the shade, the pumpkin-seed is the shade. The doctor takes them away home and eats them, that means that the shades have gone away. The words they say: 'Ours, ours! We marvel at the thing!' mean: 'The semen is ours, the shades have supported him, they have given us the semen, they have not bound it.' For if the shades are angry they bind him and the semen does not come. . . . If the heir and his dead father (or brother) were on bad terms then, although the ritual is correctly done, yet still the shades will bind his semen at the end of the ritual. Fertility (*imbapo*) does not belong to the shades but to Kyala, but if the shade is angry he binds it.

There are three symbols: the banana is the corpse and the seed is the shade. It is the filth which madmen catch hold of, it is the faeces which they eat. And the banana is the body of the man and the seed is his semen. Eating is sexual intercourse. It is this he has done during his lifetime. It is to send him away and say that we are about to put another in his homestead. It is the body and semen of him who has died. Also when a woman has died the husband eats . . . it [the banana and seed] is what we did. . . .

The seed is the shade, and it is the blood for creating a person [i.e. the semen] because the shade and the semen are brothers.[1]

Yes, they are intermingled, all are together in the ritual: the corpse, and the shade, and the body of the man [i.e. his penis] and the blood [semen] and the filth of madness; all are intermingled. You understand, Mwaipaja (G. W.), you are a priest now, you are a real priest. . . .

When they shake up the millet and lentils and pumpkin-seeds at the beer when he has finished coitus with the women it also has a double symbolism (*fyope fyo fifwani fibili*); the seed is the blood [semen]—Ours, ours—and it is the shade who has gone. Also at puberty it is like this. . . .

Those who say the *ikipiki* is one and the same for birth, puberty and the death ritual are right. It is one only. . . . The *ikipiki* is our blood, it is kept in the house of the senior wife. It pertains both to men and to the shades, for when we marry we do a ritual with it, so the shade says: 'I have eaten it during my life, I was born with it (for it went into his stomach), I married a woman with it (we wash and shave our hair with it at marriage), now that I am dead they perform the ritual with it.' It is one and the same. The *ikipiki* is our intestine.[2] It is one and the same in all lineages.

One day at a funeral roasted bananas were brought. A man started scraping the ash off his with a spear. Kasitile asked him: 'Do you scrape bananas?' He answered: 'Yes, but if there were the litter in the house we would avoid doing so.'

[1] cf. *Ulukungu*: semen; *inyungu*: pumpkin-seed.
[2] *Ubula bwa kikolo*: 'the intestine of the lineage'; the large intestine.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

764 heir. It is the ritual we are performing, they are signs of widowhood (*fya bufwele*), of lamentation (*kyo kesa*). The ashes are a sign of lamentation and the *ilingolongofwa* creeper is a sign of lamentation. Yes, all these things are part of the ritual, we cannot leave them out, it is taboo. (If we did) those below [i.e. the shades] would be angry and say: 'They have startled me and caused me pain in the heart; they have injured the ritual by foreshadowing evil.'

●768 764 [787] At the end the heir sleeps with the women in the house—before the beer. He performs the ritual with them, the officiants wait for them and ask them: 'How was it?' If he says 'No,' they say: 'Kyala does not stand in the house.' They go and divine at a doctor's who says:' So-and-so is angry.'

QUESTION: Kyala does not stand in the house (*Kyala akema nnyumba*)?

MWANDISI: It is the shades, they say Kyala does not give support. Then again he performs the ritual (*ikunyagula*, i.e. he attempts to have coitus) and they ask him: 'How was it?' They say: 'Yes, they (the shades) have stood with us, Kyala has stood with us.' [He gave both forms as alternatives: *batwemile* and *Kyala emile*.] Then they clap their hands and raise the shout of triumph (*akalulu*).

QUESTION: Is that the cry: 'Ours, ours!'?

[]84 784] MWANDISI: No, that's the cry of the hill people. With us it's taboo. Then in the morning someone shouts: 'War has come.' They come out immediately and run away to the pasture-lands.

764 QUESTION: Is this 'coming out' (*ukusoka*) the same as that in the coming out of chiefs (*ubusoka*) and in the twin ceremony?

MWANDISI: Yes, they run because their legs were heavy (*nsito*) in the house, now they have grown lighter and are strong; because in the twin ceremony the seclusion in the house lasts four months, at the coming out of chiefs two months, and that is hard, but at death it is only one, so it is light. But at death and the birth of twins it is the war (*ubwite*) of the mats. Is it not war with women? [*ubwite* is used here for sexual intercourse.] Then when they have come out they give one another beer to drink in the doorway. The heir takes beer in his mouth and spits it out and hands the vessel on to his wives and children. Each does the same. They do not swallow it. To do so causes diarrhœa. The man and his wives are burning. They have come from the bed. This giving one another to drink, when each spits and does not swallow, happens after the eating of sausages of porridge on the road.[1] It is the same in the twin ritual except that whereas it is only the principals who give one another to drink at the death ritual, in the twin ritual not only they, but all relatives, and even non-relatives do it as well!

[833 195] [753]

QUESTION: How about the eating of millet porridge with powdered medicine on the road?

[1] No other informant mentioned this in the MuNgonde death ritual.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
KaKwe

764 prepared earlier) and ties a strip of medicated banana bark round the neck of each, and with these necklaces on they must sleep. In one lineage they take little horns and blow into them and walk round calling out: 'We are driving you away, you are a stranger to us, do not come in dreams repeatedly.'

Next morning sausages of millet porridge mixed with medicine are half-buried in the earth at the cross-roads—or somewhere on the pathway—and each participant in turn bends down and bites off a piece, leaving some in the ground. They take off their bark necklaces and throw them into the little hut, which is then destroyed. After they have bathed again the officiant strokes each one on the forehead with a razor.

768 587 When a married man has died the heir is formally recognized, and the widows are asked whether they accept him as their husband, at some point during the ritual; when Mwaikambo's father died the recognition of the heir preceded the whole ritual; more often it follows it and there is a formal drinking of 'the beer of inheritance'. In any case the first intercourse between the heir and the widows is always delayed for some months and, until it has taken place, the widows may meet their relatives; after it each widow returns to the homestead of her father (or his heir) for the 'ritual of the gasping cough' (*ingotolo*). Old Fibombe, a Christian elder, described it vividly:

768 177 587 The parents of the girl brew beer and call her to the beer of *ingotolo*. They also call their relatives. She brings a hoe or a goat (or now a cloth or 1s.). First of all she lifts up the pot of beer into which an officiant has put powdered medicine (*imbondanya*) and takes a mouthful, stirring the rest, then she hands it to another participant and when he has taken a mouthful she spits out, then she stirs and hands it on, and when the next has taken a mouthful she spits, and so it continues until all present have done this. Nowadays people do not take the beer in their mouths, they simply stir and pass it on. Pride prevents them. They say people will laugh at them if they do the things of old. Time is passing and things are like *Mambo Leo* [the Swahili newspaper] now. All [184] pagans, however, still do this ritual in a modified form, only the Christians leave it undone.

768 587 This informant omitted two significant points in the ritual which we saw for ourselves: the widow brings a spear belonging to her new husband and thrusts it into the earth outside her father's house. It stands beside the vessel of beer while her kinsmen drink until her brother plucks it out and takes it into the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
KuKwe

house. Then she goes in and steals a piece of firewood from the loft[1] and runs off with it, laughing. The officiant pursues her and makes her drop it and gives her medicine, while the company cry: 'A thief, a thief!' She takes the firewood back to her husband's home. 'It is a sign that she has entered her father's house, just as the spear is a sign that she has entered the house of another husband.' In rich families the new husband sends a bull which is killed and eaten at the ritual.

Our informants were agreed that 'there is no fear of the gasping cough if a woman runs away from her husband and goes to a lover', and in practice no ritual is performed when she visits her father after divorce and re-marriage, but it is perhaps significant that such a situation could scarcely have arisen in the past, since divorce by agreement rarely, if ever, occurred. An adulterer fled, if he could, with his lover to another chiefdom, breaking off all relations with her kin.

(*b*) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

Now we turn to the Kukwe interpretation of events. Our two principal informants here were Mwasalemba, an elderly pagan man, brother to the chief Porokoto, whose wife, Syungu, acted as officiant at rituals in the chief's family, and Kakune, a young doctor who had learnt the medicines from his mother. Mwasalemba was much more coherent than Syungu herself, and his interpretation was confirmed by Kakune and numerous other informants. Again I give the interpretation of the two principal informants without any editing other than placing consecutively statements made on different occasions.

i. *Mwasalemba's interpretation.* (Recorded by G. W. and translated by him soon afterwards.)

MWASALEMBA: Perhaps a youth, perhaps a girl, runs mad; he runs about naked so that we say: 'He's mad, why doesn't he cover himself?' He goes to the place of defaecation and takes filth and eats it: he goes into people's houses and takes things, he might even take some things from you, from a European, without fear; he knows not what he does. Sometimes, after a visit to a doctor, he recovers altogether and never has the fit again—that is the lesser kind of madness. But sometimes he recovers and then the fit takes him again later—that is the more serious

[1] The loft (*pijulu*) consists of horizontal beams running at wall level across a portion of the hut. Here every married woman keeps a supply of dry firewood. It is her private store-place which may not be touched without her permission.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Ku Kwe

775 764 shade (*jonsyuka*)! That (which was buried) is just earth, the body has rotted, it is the shade that we care for.

QUESTION: And the necklace of banana bark?

764 MWASALEMBA: We sleep with them. In the morning we bathe again and throw them in the water. . . . Yes, indeed, some throw them away in the little hut. It is the shade, we perform the ritual and throw him away. . . . If we do not perform the ritual we do not sleep, then we pray in the banana grove and are startled.

QUESTION: Why the banana bark?

MWASALEMBA: It is with the banana that we perform the ritual: the plantain is what we steal and the sweet banana what we cut at home, and in the banana grove we pray.

When a man dies his wives sit in a row on a bark-cloth. It's at the shaving of the hair, the doctor shaves them on the bark-cloth. It's a new one because we say: 'You must throw away the bark-cloths which your husband who has died caught hold of, and wear other cloths.' So they sit on a new one.

QUESTION: What do they do with it?

MWASALEMBA: They throw it away on the litter.

QUESTION: Where?

MWASALEMBA: In the little hut. It means: 'Here we have mourned; let us throw away everything, let us wear others.' If a woman has died we men do not sit on the bark-cloth, but if I have died then my wife sits on the bark-cloth and throws away her old ones, and also when a son has died the mother throws away her old bark-cloths, but she does not sit on the bark-cloth! No! And she does not throw away her bark-cloth for the death of a small son, nor for a daughter, even though she be grown up. No! See, she is also a woman and wears a bark-cloth in front. But for a grown son a mother throws away her bark-cloths, saying: 'Because he was my child, I bore him, he sucked my breasts, so I throw away the bark-cloths.' Only for a grown son who has wives in his house does the mother throw away her bark-cloth, not for a bachelor.

764 QUESTION: The stones between the fingers?

775 MWASALEMBA: We throw him away. It is the shade.

QUESTION: Is the first intercourse after a death a ritual or not?

764 MWASALEMBA: No, it is not a ritual; we begin to have intercourse ● 768 when the ritual is finished. But among the Penja when someone has 171 died and the ritual has been performed and is finished, the husband takes a cow and gives it to the father of his wife, saying: 'I take the woman.' Then he has intercourse with her. But we do not, except in the case of twins.

833 QUESTION: And ordinary intercourse?

775 MWASALEMBA: The shade is together with the heart (*alinajo indumbula*); it is he who is roused and goes to a woman, it is he who stiffens

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

764 sometimes perform the ritual, but we lack conclusive evidence.
602 One case in which a sister's daughter of the deceased man performed the ritual was recorded, but at other funerals girls in the same relationship did not. Kakune, the doctor, asserted that a boy would perform the ritual for his mother's brother for 'he is mother, the brother of mother (*jo juba ulilumbu gwa juba*)', but in a number of cases we observed women performing the rituals for their brothers though their sons did not. A man's children may possibly perform the ritual for his sister but we traced no case of their doing so.

768 Those who drink the ritual beer when a widow returns to her
602 father's house after her union with the heir are her father and the men of his lineage—brothers, half-brothers, sons, and some of his brother's sons; the wives and children of these; and daughters of the lineage, her own sisters and half-sisters, and sisters of her father, but *not* the husbands or children of daughters of the lineage. At one *ingotolo* ritual we attended there were present eleven men of the lineage, eighteen daughters, and thirty-two wives, as well as numerous children (cf. genealogy, Table (e)).

764 When a woman has died those who come to cut the banana
593 grove and give medicated meat to her children are the *abipwa*—her brother (or his heir) and his wives.

764 The principals at a death ritual, then, are children and grand-
602 children, parents and grandparents, spouses, and certain siblings of the deceased, together with some of their children. If a woman dies, or a widow is inherited, her agnatic kin and their wives are concerned as well.

845 The group which takes protective medicine after an abnormal
602 birth is larger. All the wives and children and grandchildren of
751 the father of twins must come, his full siblings with their children and grandchildren, and the wives of his brothers, but not the husbands of his sisters; some of his half-brothers, with wives and children, some of the children of his father's brothers' sons (but not of father's brothers' daughters) and of his father's sisters' sons. On the mother's side her father, or his heirs, must take part with his wives and children, and her sisters. At the ritual for Mwakobela and his wife, previously described, we counted 136 relatives taking part, of which 24 were men, 19 boys, 33 women, 12 girls, and 35 babies (cf. genealogy, Table (a)).

845 When the mother of twins took the *ilibalaga* back to her 'father',
602 her brother (heir to her father), with his wives and children, her

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya

the dead man) has been done already; that of to-day is for the dead man and his child together.' 764

c. 11.30 a.m. The women left the house empty; suddenly the men fell on Mpogo and dragged him struggling into the empty house; the women likewisedragged in Kalukwa—still smeared in ashes. The pair were left alone here with the officiant but, as I heard afterwards, they made no attempt to mate now, it is taboo until the beer. After three or four minutes Kina Nsambe called Mwaipalu (see genealogy) to summon them (*ukukasosya*). He went with a stick to the door and pushed it open. Each then came out with a string of green creeper (*nkolonowa*) over the right shoulder. 'This is the sign that we have given him the inheritance.' 'They do not have intercourse, however, until the beer.' Each went to bathe, separately, escorted by friends of the same sex—'to keep them company'. 764 768

The two chief officiants were non-relatives, Sikabile, wife of Mwenenganga, and her assistant Mwanyengenye; but the older female relatives assisted them too, and were referred to as *abanyago*. 764

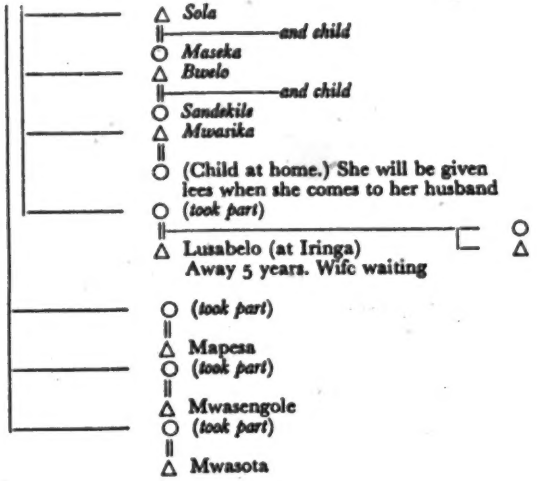
Sikabile brought a plantain flower, carefully wrapped in a plantain leaf, into the swept place near the door. She dug a little grave and buried it. There was a discussion about the right direction, and it was decided that the point represented the legs of the corpse and must be set to face BuKinga. The leaf was not buried. 'They take a plantain flower because the deceased was a man. If it had been a woman, they would have taken a sweet banana.' Then, one by one, the principals came and rubbed forehead, right elbow, right hand, and right toe in the pile of earth there—once facing BuKinga and then, all over again, facing the otherway. Then they went to bathe. One infant was touched with earth in the correct places by the officiant. Boys and their father bathed separately—'it is always taboo for them to bathe together'.

Mpogo told me that he lives in the hills at Mwakilema's, but all the ritual, including the drinking of beer, will be done here. 'If there was millet available,' he said, 'we would start the brewing now; as it is, we must wait for the new millet. We have sown all our millet.'

After all had bathed, the officiant poured water for them with powdered medicine in it, at the doorway. One by one they stood in the doorway and she outside, and they washed hands, and mouth, and both knees; then her assistant handed her for each a banana, roasted and unscraped, with the end broken off and with a pumpkin-seed and a lentil, stuck in it, and some powder on it. The officiant held it near the ground and each stooped to bite it, then took hold of it and ate it—some bit first without touching with the hand, some caught hold of it. To each she gave more roast bananas and seeds separately too. In all the ritual Kalukwa (the widow) came last and Mpogo usually last but one. Now he was last but one.

The women then all gathered inside the house and the sisters of

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



Key: △ ○ = alive. ▲ ● = dead.
Name in capitals = Widow inherited. Names in italics = participated in ritual. † = Christian.

Participants:

Men of lineage	11	Father + his full brother + 4/6 his half-brothers + widow's 2 full brothers + 2/3 half-brothers; son of half-brother.
Daughters of lineage	18	6/8 half-sisters (1 Christian, 1 away), 8/10 father's half-sisters (1 Christian, 1 away did not), 4 unmarried daughters of half-brother.
Wives	32	Mother, 2 co-wives of mother, 2 wives of father's brother, 15 wives of father's half-brothers (including chief) (1 sick, drank at home), 3 Christian did not come, 4 wives of own full brothers, 3 wives of half-brothers, 1 widow of grandfather, 4 wives of father's half-brother's sons.
Children		of brothers, of father's brothers, and half-brothers.

N.B. Sons-in-law do not participate.

601
763
768

[facing p. 274 (A)]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

(7) ○ Nsole (inherited by Mwasalemba)

○ Malija† (Did not come, no medicine sent)
△ Ulinyelusi†

○
△ Filipo† (Gone to Dar-es-Salaam)

△ *Johani*
(1) ○ *Ngota*
children
(2) ○ *Sambuselo*

○ (*took part*)
Kilongo
△ Undekile

○ (*took part:* came without children)
△ Mpekele

○ (*took part*)
△ Mwasota

▲
●
△ *Sola*
and child
○ *Maseka*
△ *Buselo*
and child
○ *Sandekile*
△ *Mwasiku*

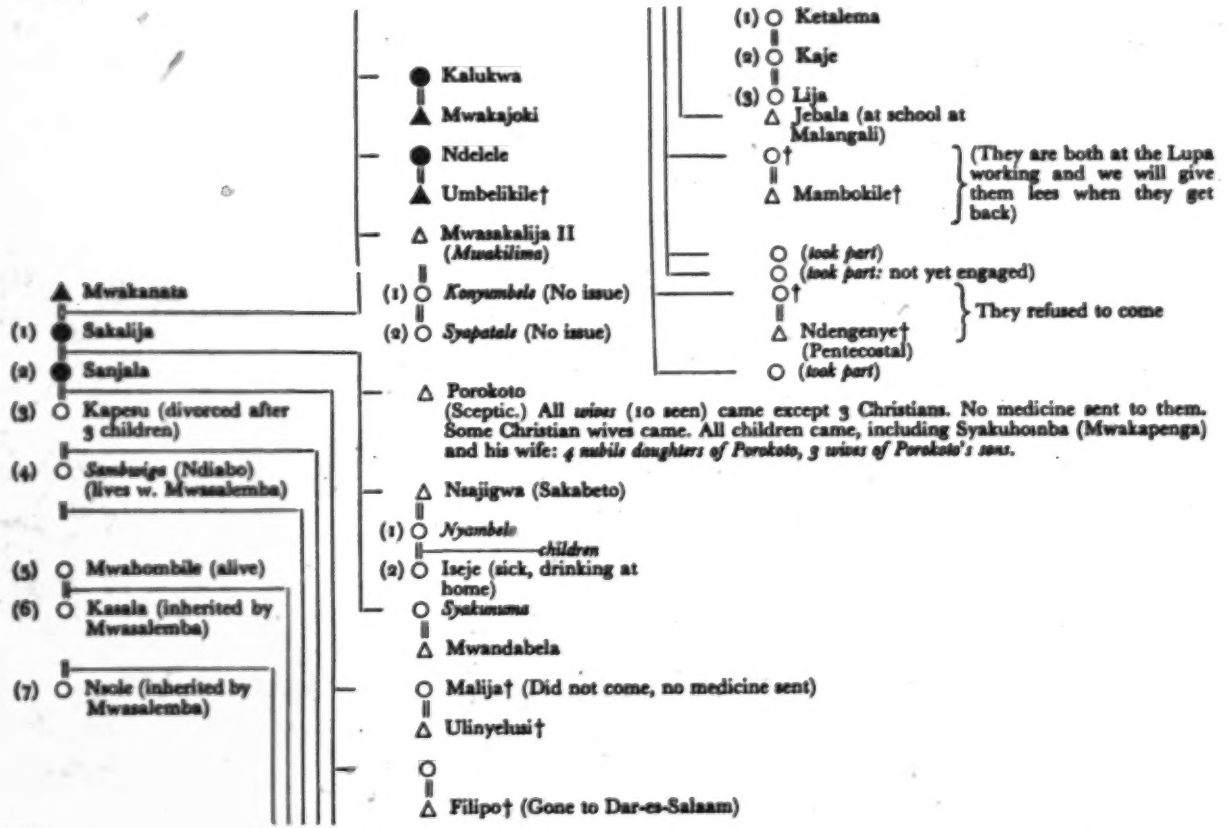
○ (Child at home.) She will be given lees when she comes to her husband
○ (*took part*)
△ Lusabelo (at Iringa)
Away 5 years. Wife waiting

○
△

601
783
768

[FACING P. 274 (B)]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa


Kalukwa
Mwakajoki
Ndelele
Umbelikile†
Mwasakalija II (*Mwatilima*)
(1) *Konyumbele* (No issue)
(2) *Syapatale* (No issue)
Mwakanata
(1) Sakalija
(2) Sanjala
(3) Kapesu (divorced after 3 children)
(4) *Sambwiga* (Ndiabo) (lives w. Mwasalemba)
(5) Mwahombile (alive)
(6) Kasala (inherited by Mwasalemba)
(7) Nsole (inherited by Mwasalemba)
(1) Ketalema
(2) Kaje
(3) Lija
Jebala (at school at Malangali)
Mambokile† (They are both at the Lupa working and we will give them fees when they get back)
(*took part*)
(*took part:* not yet engaged)
Ndengenye† (Pentecostal) They refused to come
(*took part*)
Porokoto
(Sceptic.) All *wives* (10 seen) came except 3 Christians. No medicine sent to them. Some Christian wives came. All children came, including Syakuhoomba (Mwakapenga) and his wife: *4 nubile daughters of Porokoto, 3 wives of Porokoto's sons.*
Nsajigwa (Sakabeto)
(1) *Nyambele*
children
(2) Iseje (sick, drinking at home)
Syakunuma
Mwandabela
Malija† (Did not come, no medicine sent)
Ulinyelusi†
Filipo† (Gone to Dar-es-Salaam)

601
763
768

[facing p. 274 (C)]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

601
783
768

TABLE (c) (*See pp.* 43, 192).

GENEALOGY OF MWASALEMBA (RITUAL OF THE GASPING COUGH)

[facing p. 274(D)]

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

Lepers are now buried like ordinary persons. But in the not very distant past, they were placed in a sitting position against a tree, and so left to be devoured. No one of those who carried the body looked behind, lest he also should be "caught" by the disease. 761

About a month after the funeral, the beer feast takes place. A small quantity is taken to the grave, and the dead man is addressed, and bidden again to go to his ancestors. "Take this beer as an offering to them. The ox that we have killed is also for them." The day is given up to eating and drinking, with intervals of wailing, the men in the open, the women in the house of the heir, or near relative of the dead man. 765

The ceremonies for women and children are similar to those described. A small chief, near Karonga, who was utterly neglectful of his mother during her life, impoverished himself in the splendour of her funeral. The grave was completely lined with expensive cloths, and the body was decked out as it never had been in life. The man's grief was genuine; or if it was not grief, it was fear of what the old lady, with her renewed powers, might do, if he did not attend to her now that she was dead. 764

When the mourning is over, all the friends of the dead man shave their heads. Omission of this ceremony involves the careless one in a quarrel with the departed. 765 302

Here and there throughout the country ancient customs survive which have been dropped by the majority of the people. In many places the entrance of the heir upon his new position is accompanied by 768

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

•768 strange ceremonies. He is taken hold of by the men, and the wives of the dead by the women, and put into the house, the women being told that this man is now their husband. Presently they come out again, and the man is garlanded with leaves, and his head covered with ashes. When all have washed in running water or in the lake, another ceremony must be gone through. Bananas and small beans are roasted, and the company, led by the doctor, move out on their hips to the road, where the doctor digs a small hole, into which he inserts a banana, and into the banana a bean. One by one the people come up, and stooping down, eat the banana without touching it with their hands, a fresh banana being placed for each until all have eaten. Next, with a white fowl and a bunch of bananas, all go to the stream or the lake, where the fowl and the bananas are dipped twice, and each goes in on hands and knees, completely submerged, turns right round, and comes out again. The wives now go each to her father, to inform him that they have a new husband, and the latter sends to each of his fathers-in-law a gift of a hoe.

In the family of the Nyangomale, the heir washes all the children of the deceased, big or little, by pouring water upon their outstretched hands, himself keeping as far off as he can, for none of the water must touch him. He and his new wife, or wives, are now bound together by the thumbs with bark-cloth, and go to the stream, where they wash, and throw away the bark-cloth which bound them. A feast follows.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

The Bakifuna go to the stream to wash, garlanded with flowers, and carrying a small stone. Flowers and stone are thrown into the stream after the washing, and the company re-enter the house. The doctor takes water and pours it on the roof, upon which all come out one by one, the water dripping on each as he or she passes. Anointed with oil, they all go to the place of burial, where, resting on elbows and knees, they draw themselves along the grave, slightly disturbing the soil as they go. The hair is then cut, and the feast follows. 768

When a chief is *in articulo mortis*, his headmen and his wives are present, and he is addressed, while still living, as common men are addressed at the graveside. "Go to God and the spirits; go to your fathers (naming them). Rest there, and tell them what is happening here above." 766 643 622

After he is dead, the nails of his fingers and toes are clipped, and his hair cut, and given to the doctor, who will make medicine with them to prevent the disease which killed the chief passing over to others. The dead man is now dressed as common men are dressed for burial, but much more elaborately, and, if he is a relative of Chungu, he is placed in a sitting position in the house, where his wives and headmen embrace him for the last time. If he is a very important chief, like Chungu, his death is not yet announced to the people.

Meantime a cow has been killed at the place where the body is to be buried, and the headmen dig the grave, usually by night, if intimation has not been

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

584 live with her husband until at least three cows have been given. One of the bulls is only given if the girl is virgin at her initiation rite, and this bull is given to her mother. The laws of inheritance and the system of marriage by cattle payments ensures that cattle will be in the hands of the older men. In general polygynists are men over forty-five.[1]

595 The first wife married is the chief wife, and is entitled to respect and obedience from her co-wives. Her first son is her husband's ultimate heir. A man cannot lightly divorce his first wife during the lifetime of his own father who provided the cattle
586 with which she was married. Divorce is effected by the return of the marriage cattle. Usually the woman has a lover who will pay cows to redeem her; if she refuses to go back to her husband there is no means of compelling her to do so, though in pre-European times her father and the chief might send her back. In such a case the husband would be entitled to his original payments plus their increase.[2] Men do not demand divorce for adultery unless it is persistent.[3] Divorce is often sought for very trivial reasons.[4] If the paternal uncles have helped the groom to collect his marriage cattle, the beasts are redistributed to their original donors after they have been returned to the husband.[5]

587 A man whose wife dies can claim a substitute or the refund of his cattle. When a man dies his widows pass to his heir who takes them all as wives, if he is a brother of
●768 the dead man; if the heir is a son he takes all except his own mother and the wives who are her close kin. Inherited wives have the same land rights as others.[6]

INHERITANCE

428 Brothers inherit before sons, then half-brothers (linked half-brothers before other half-brothers). When all the brothers are dead the property and wives of each pass to each one's eldest son.[7] This rule also applies to the Nyamwanga and Iwa.[8] The heir assumes the full obligations of father to his younger brothers and is responsible for their marriages; they hoe for him and are fed by his wives as are unmarried sons.[9] The sister's son only inherits if all near patrilineal kinsmen are dead or are infants.[10]

The above applies to commoners' inheritance only. For chiefs, succession and inheritance may follow different principles. For instance, in succession to local chiefdoms, two or more sons would divide the chiefdom. Among the Ngonde the Kyungu and the great chiefs were not chosen according to strict genealogical right, but were selected from the appropriate families according to their wealth, generosity, and courage. In the succession to the great chiefdoms, there was formerly a difference of procedure in the two royal lines: that of Ngelenge, where the nobles of Ngonde were sent by the Kyungu to help to select the successor; that of Ngana, the line of the female side, where the nobles of Ngonde merely summoned the great commoners to discuss with them who was to succeed. Nowadays the difference between the two lines has disappeared, and the Ngelenge custom is followed for both. If the genealogical heir

[1] Wilson, 2, 1936, pp. 257–9.
[2] Wilson, 2, 1936, p. 263.
[3] Ibid., p. 65.
[4] Ibid., 2, 1936, pp. 264–6; Sanderson, 3, 1923, p. 453.
[5] Wilson, 3, 1938, pp. 11 and 28; Johnston, 1897, p. 471.
[6] Mackenzie, 1925, p. 55.
[7] Mackenzie, 1925, p. 92.
[8] Wilson, 3, 1938, p. 27.
[9] Coxhead, 1914, p. 45.
[10] Wilson, 5, 1939, p. 55.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Unmarried children have the right to food partly in virtue of their general relationship to their parents, partly because they themselves assist in the work of the household. From the age of about six years boys herd cattle, from about eleven years they begin to hoe; while girls help their mothers in field work, in the fetching of wood and water and in the care of infants. And, owing to their practical usefulness, there seems to be less difficulty in getting motherless[1] children regularly fed before they marry than in getting them entertained afterwards. Each such child is allotted to one wife and is mainly fed by her.

In some households unmarried sons hoe only the particular plots of their own mothers; but in others the man and his sons work together as a team, hoeing each plot in turn. In ten neighbouring polygynous households I found that in three cases the sons confined themselves to the plots of their own mothers, in seven the man and his sons worked always together. Meals followed the same pattern as the hoeing. In the three cases the mother of each boy alone provided him with food, but in the other seven cases his step-mothers did also.

This variation of custom between different households was thus explained to me: "The custom of hoeing separately, each boy for his own mother only, is sometimes determined by lack of friendship between the women, sometimes by the slackness of their husband in hoeing. If he is slack about hoeing then it falls to the women to organize it, and each calls on her own son to hoe for her alone; and, in that case, if one wife has no son she will just have to enlist the services of other people to hoe for her (rewarding their efforts with food at the end of each day). Sometimes too the custom arises in this way—a boy finds that his step-mothers are reluctant to cook food for him when he comes in from hoeing, he complains that while his own mother cooks for him generously they do not, and so he begins to hoe for his mother alone.

"The custom of hoeing together, on the other hand, is determined by the will of the man, who himself organizes it. And whenever a man is vigorous in hoeing there you will find that he and his sons all hoe together. It is only when a man is slack that the custom of hoeing separately arises from the orders of the women, and if the man is vigorous in hoeing his wives are never reluctant and ungenerous about cooking, they bow to his will just as his sons do."

When their husband dies women pass to his heir. If the heir is a brother of the dead man then he takes them all to wife, if a son he takes

[1] The custom of marrying two sisters and that of substituting a dead woman's sister or niece in her place considerably reduces the number of such "motherless" children, for the sister of a dead woman treats the latter's children as her own.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

768 587 [421] all except his own mother, whom he either builds for at a little distance and looks after, or else gives to a half-brother.[1] Inherited wives have the same land rights as others, and a mother for whom a son builds and hoes is treated by him, in the matter of land, just like a wife.

737 And a married man often supports an old woman—a mother, mother-in-law or elder sister—whose husband, though still alive, is incapable of hoeing and who has no unmarried sons. He may either hoe for her on her own husband's land or else assign to her a plot or two of his own.

241 476 The gardens of a household are not only worked by its members, other people assist them from time to time. Each married man usually invites a group of his village neighbours to help him with a day's hoeing two or three times a year, entertaining them to food and beer after the work is over. A married woman likewise is often assisted by women friends from neighbouring households in the planting, weeding or reaping of her crops and them she rewards simply with a luxurious meal in the evening, without any beer. Again, as we have seen, a married woman sometimes engages a young man to hoe for her regularly, for a month or more at a time, and pays him by feeding him well for that period.

241 464 But although this last custom is still common it is beginning to decline; fewer men each year are willing to work for any length of time except for money, and already in some of the more prosperous households young men are found to be employed in hoeing at the rate of 2/- a month in addition to their food. The young men who thus accept employment in hoeing are always the poor ones, those for whom (whether because their fathers are poor in cattle or because they have many elder brothers before them) the prospect of getting married is too distant to stimulate them to any great diligence at home. In the plain of Mungonde, however, where ploughs are extensively used, the owners of ploughs make a considerable profit by hiring themselves out with their ploughs at 2/- a plot (*ulupaka*).

241 592 602 606 Kinsmen and affines also often assist in a household's hoeing. When a man inherits his dead father's wealth then he assumes the position of father towards his own younger brothers and is responsible for the marriages of any who are bachelors; they then hoe for him and are fed by his wives just as unmarried sons do. Sons-in-law, again, are expected to bring their friends now and then to help their father-in-law in hoeing and they often do so, more particularly if they are behindhand with the marriage-cattle. After the day's work is over, however, they are entertained just as sumptuously as an ordinary work-party of neighbours.

---

[1] And any kinswoman of his mother (sister or niece) whom his father has married is treated likewise.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

full-brother steps into his place, takes his wives, huts, land and cows and looks after his children; after him the next full-brother inherits and so on, until, when all are dead, the property and wives of each pass to each one's senior son.[9]

The heir has exactly the same obligations to his predecessor's children that the dead man had himself while alive, but frequently he has less will to perform them; and his conformity is often only assured by the pressure of legal and religious sanctions.

This rule of inheritance is part of a more general fact, which is that, in Nyakyusa society, death does not break a family and its relationships, but simply alters the particular people between whom these relationships obtain. Only rarely does death leave a man or woman widowed, or a child orphaned; nearly always some one is at once substituted in place of the one who has died. When a woman dies young her parents are bound either to give another daughter to her husband or else to return the marriage-cattle to him so that he can obtain another wife; when a man dies his wives and children are not left alone but taken by his heir. If the heir is a brother he takes all the women as his wives, if a son he builds a separate hut for his own mother and takes the others. And the heir is now "the father" of the dead man's children. Even when a man and all his full-brothers are dead the families of each are still united for some purposes under the leadership of each one's senior son (eldest son of chief wife). The senior son is now called "father" by his siblings and half-siblings, he is religiously responsible for them all (*vide infra*), he normally exchanges cows with the eldest brother in each individual family (*vide infra.*), he is entitled to their respect and obedience.

Half-brothers may, or may not, be linked especially closely together. They may, as we have seen, be linked by blood when their two mothers are either sisters or close kinswomen, they may also be linked by an exchange of cattle, by "milking each other's cows" (*okokamanela*). Each group of full brothers regards the cows that come in from the marriages of their sisters as their own cattle, but the father disposes of these cattle as he wishes. If he gives some of their cows to a half-brother, he thereby creates between the eldest of the group and this man the special relationship of "milking each other's cows;" and it is expected that the cows given will in time be returned by this half-brother from the marriage-cattle either of a full sister or of a daughter of his own. And the exchange once begun goes on; as their sisters and daughters marry

[9] This refers to commoner's inheritance only.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So also is their dependence on *both* cultivation and herding, and it should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District today is less than half the human population, and men traditionally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

In every version of the myth the tension between father and son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior. Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother. The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of commoners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and seniors.

As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter is a quite separate myth[1] which tells of a chief who looked on his daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire, which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw. She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband, while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence of this.

This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

immured in the royal enclosure—a great stockade—and jealously guarded, for any infidelity on their part was thought to make their husband ill, and with him the whole country.

When the Kyungu did fall ill he was smothered by the nobles who lived around him at Mbande, and buried in great secrecy, with a score or more of living persons—slaves—in the grave beneath him, and one or two wives and the sons of commoners above. And in the midst of all this slaughter the nobles brought a sheep to look into the grave that the dead Kyungu might be gentle (*mololo*) like the sheep!

The living Kyungu was thought to create food and rain, and his breath and the growing parts of his body—his hair and nails and the constantly replaced mucus of his nose—were believed to be magically connected with the fertility of the Ngonde plain. When he was killed his nostrils were stopped so that he was buried 'with the breath in his body'; while portions of his hair and nails and of his nasal mucus were taken from him beforehand and buried by the nobles of Ngonde in the black mud near the river. This was 'to defend the country against hunger', 'to close up the land, to keep it rich and heavy and fertile as it was when he himself lived in it'.

His death was kept secret—a relatively easy matter since he lived in seclusion—and one of the nobles (*Ngosi*) impersonated him wearing his clothes. After a month or two when the nobles had decided whom to choose as the new Kyungu, the luckless man was summoned to Mbande: 'Your father calls you.' 'Then he came with his companions and entered the house to make obeisance; they seized him and put the sacred cloth on him and set him on the stool "Kisumbi", saying, "Thou Kyungu, thou art he", and he became the Kyungu. Then they struck the drum, Mwenekelwa, and everyone knew that the Kyungu had died and another had been installed.' Men feared greatly to be seized as the Kyungu, just as they feared to be seized as the Lwembe, because the life of a divine king was short. Ngonde historians quote a number of cases of sons of the Kyungu who fled to escape being set on the stool; once they had sat on it they dared not flee lest they die.

Though[1] the early Kyungus had lived on the stony top of Mbande none of them had been buried there, for 'the ground was

[1] The following section is quoted, with additions and amendments, from Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, pp. 29 ff.